

## [Bargain House]

(Life History) CONTINUITY

February 16, 1939

J. Buford Dudley (white)

124 Thomas St.

Athens, Ga.

Merchant

Grace McCune, writer

### BARGAIN HOUSE

As I walked down a side street in the business section of town, looking for something interesting to get a story about, a large sign swinging out in front of a store drew my attention. Fastened on a rod, it was swinging in the wind and boldly announcing to the world that "Every day is a Bargain day here."

In the window was a display of most everything that is carried in a dry good and ready to wear store. Yet it was very neat and attractive to be such a small window, and in one corner of the window was a small sign, which read "old and used clothing, bought and sold as well as the latest styles out."

It looked interesting and thinking I might be able to get a good story here, I opened the door and went in. A tall, well dressed man, was waiting on a customer showing him

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children's overalls. Seeing no one else in the store I looked around at the different things and how they were arranged.

It is a small store and most every bit of the floor space is used for either a table or show case. On the right as you go in the door is a long rack on which is a display of men and boy's suits, and just beyond that is the shelves for shoes. Also a small wrapping [wrapping?] table with a small cash register on it.

On the left was ladies hats, dresses, and dry goods. At the back of the narrow room was a long rack of second hand clothing. In 2 the front was a glass show case in which was displayed hose, ladies underwear and baby clothes. On two long tables at the back of the show case was the overalls, mens trousers and some piece goods. A small rack of childrens silk and wash dresses was also on the left side of the store.

As the customer went out with his overalls, the man came to me and asked what he could show me. I replied that I was just waiting for him and asked if he was the proprietor of the store. He replied that he was. I then explained that it was my first visit to his store and why I came in. He laughed, then said, "That old sign is a very good drawing card as it brings in new customers most every day. But how do you like my little store? I only opened it last August, but I have done pretty good. I bought out a man that only sold and bought second hand clothing and to get the store I had to buy his stock also. As it was paying pretty good, I decided to continued with this line as well as the new for there is really a demand for used clothing.

Two boys came in the front door and asking me to have a chair in the little room at the back of the store, he went to wait on the boys. As I went in the very small room, I found that a large heater with glowing sides, two chairs, and a bench, a small table. As I waited I could see in the other room, where the boys were trying to sell a suit of clothes and one of them said, "It is a good suit but it is just too small."

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Mr. Brown bought the suit and paid three dollars, the price they asked. Before the boys went out they had bought shoes and a shirt each. As he came back he said, "See there if I had not bought that suit, they would have went somewhere else, to buy their shoes 3 and shirts. I asked how long had he been in this kind of business before he opened this store. He laughed and said, "Well, I have worked in dry good and clothing stores for about 29 years so I should know how to sell.

"But I was born on Feb. 24, 1887 on a farm, about four miles from Comer, Ga. and near the old Hard Shell Baptist Church. I have been to that old church many times and especially to the foot washings. Now that is something interesting if you have never been and all together different from what you might think. For instead of being funny it is very solemn and also sad, or at least that is the way it impresses me."

\*1 Another customer came in and [he went [??] to wait on\*1] him. The man wanted to know if he had any high top shoes for small boys. For [?] explained his boy had a weak ankle and just had to use wear a strong high top shoe. Mr. The Brown merchant said, Have you got "Did you bring the child with you?" The customer said Receiving a negative reply , " No," then the clerk made this suggestion. he suggested Why not bring your boy in and fit him right I've sold shoes for years and that's about the only way that you can fit anyone correctly, and especially if it has to be a certain fit or make of shoe and perhaps I could also [?] have braces fitted that would help your son. The man thanked him and said, "Why I had never thought of that!" the customer said and I sure will bring him in when I come back to town. and Maybe [?] we'll come in the morning for he really needs something to support his ankle. Sometimes it will give way with him when he's walking and he just falls down." After buying some cloth for his wife, he thanked Mr. Brown the merchant again and went out. As he [?] I said, "You have made a friend and a good customer out of that man I remarked to the merchant . His reply was, "I think so and it's so easy to be nice to people. Of course, we come in contact with all 4 with all classes of people. Some that just will not let you be nice regardless of how hard you try. [?] But where was I at in telling my

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story? I reminded him that he had just finished telling me about the old Hard Shell Baptist Church, and he continued! "Well when I was about three, my mother got sick and do you know I was eleven 11 before I remember her being able to get out of bed again. She was sick so long and that my father spent everything he had trying to get her well.

"When I was eight 8 I went to the fields and ploughed plowed like a man, and I ploughed [plowed?] day in and day out until I was 20. But hard as it was, we came back, got out of debt , bought our home and we had plenty of everything that could be raised on a farm. For My father believed in working, but [and?] he believed in having a plenty of everything needed We of course had all kind of things that grow in gardens, and on a farm; and we didn't have to buy feed for our stock either, for there was plenty of that raised.

"We had chickens turkeys, geese, and guineas, and [stet?] raised all our hogs . and We had meat from one hog killing to the next, and cows and plenty of good fresh milk, butter and eggs. Also fruits of all many kinds. And I'll tell you now, we didn't have to wait for company to come to get something [?] [good?] fixed, for we had what we wanted at any time. Father said that we had worked for it and should have it and he liked to have good things to eat.

" I [?] lived three 3 miles from school and didn't get to go to school until I was eleven 11 years old. and We went to school [a?] after the work in the fields was finished. [??????] We stayed all day, too, [??] carried our dinner with us, and with [?] all the time I went to school, I just finished the fifth grade. Our teacher was a man and he was mean as the devil. I know I shouldn't say that but it is the truth. 5 "The larger boys did everything they could to aggravate him because he was so mean. I guess I was mean to. [?] Any way I would get from one to three whippings a day. [?] "What did he whip with? I asked. [?] "Why, he used big switches, sticks or anything that he could get his hands on, except his walking stick. He had one made out of a large [?]. He was very particular with it, and would not allow any of us to so much as touch that stick.

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"He was always nearly [about? half?] drunk and every day at noon and recess periods he would take that his walking stick and go out in the woods. We followed him one day at dinner time and we found out why he carried that cane with him. It had a big cork in one end, and would you believe it, he took that cork out and drank [out of it for he had his corn liquor in it. corn liquor from the hollow cane. When he stopped drank it he was just about drunk. We hurried back to tell the others what we had seen.

"We hunted up about forty or fifty pins and put them in the big cushion in his chair. He came in and rang the bell like he would tear it up. That was one time we hurried in when the bell rang for we were anxious to see what he would do. He looked at us like he could go through us, as we marched by his chair. As we all got to arrived at our seats desks , he just flopped down in his chair, but he came up in a hurry and the cushion came with him. His eyes looked like they would pop out of his head, as he tried to pull that cushion lose from him.

"We all yelled out and laughed . It was just too funny to watch him, but that is where we give gave ourselves away for he knew then that some of us was were responsible for those pins. He kept every one of the boys in after school and tried to find out which one who did it. No one would tell - just didn't know a thing about it. He got a bundle of sticks and said if we didn't tell he would whip the whole crowd for he knew then he would get the guilty one. [?] <printpgno>6 [?] " And Still no one knew anything about the pins. Why we didn't even know that there was a pin in the schoolhouse. Then the whipping started. I'll say we really got a trashing thrashed , and he didn't miss a one of us either . Almost beat us to death. Oh, yes, he got the guilty ones, for we was were all , everyone of us in it.

"He didn't last very long after that as a teacher for we told why he gave us such a whipping and about his drinking. walking-stick flask. Some of our fathers got a hold of that cane and found the whiskey in it. As soon as they could get somebody else they let him go. For he

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was never able to learn [teach?] us anything. I guess one reason was because we disliked him so much.

“Our next teacher was man also. But such a different one! He was a fine man person, and teacher and we all liked him. All I ever learned in school was from him. He did not believe in whipping, but was strict with us and made us study. Yet, he never had any trouble with a one of us. He was a good man.

“When I was about 17 seventeen I got sick and was sick for a long time. The doctors were treating me for indigestion, but I didn't get any better. Finally my doctor sent me to Augusta for an operation for appendicitis, and on the 17th of October 1907 they operated on me. The \*2 doctor in Augusta that operated [operating\*2] kept me there for in that Augusta hospital two weeks and charged me \$500 for the operation and hospital bill. But When I was ready to come home I asked the doctor for my appendix. He said they were it was in such a bad condition, in fact were just rotten and that they had to throw them it away. But that they said they had some one that belonged to had been taken from another man and I could have them that if I wanted them it . I thanked them and told them I didn't care of for anyone else's appendix . I came home much worse off than I was before the operation. 7 “I stayed at home until January, [?] 1908. Then I went to St. Joseph's Hospital in Atlanta. One of the doctors there, after the x-rays, examinations, [??], and x-rays, said, ‘Well, son, you will have to have an operations for appendicitis.’ I couldn't understand and told them that I had an operation for that, just a few months back. They He said, ‘Well, you still have them it so what are you going to do about it?’

“I was in such a condition that something had to be done. I told them to go ahead and see what they could find. They laughed and promised and said, ‘Well, We will find your appendix. Want to bet on it? I was sure they wouldn't, but was just about too sick to care, but after the operation and after I had come to myself, that was the first thing they showed me, my appendictic appendix. They were It was in a very bad condition. All that suffering and hospital bill in Augusta had didn't do me any done me no good.

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"It seemed as if I just couldn't get any better, and on the eleventh (11 th day of March I had to have another operation. For three days and nights I didn't know anything. They had sent for all my folks and just knew I was going to check out, but I wasn't ready to die and after the fourth day I began to mend. I stayed there in the hospital for twenty-seven (27) weeks.

"After I got better I had a good time for , the Sisters nuns - we called them Sisters' - were so nice . They did everything that they could for us. There was a man there who had been burned. He was in a terrible fix, but so jolly with it all. There was A young doctor was there for treatment. We were soon put in a room together, for the Sisters said they could keep up with us better that way.

"We did enjoy teasing and playing jokes on these good Sister. They were good sports and could take it . and Very often we got it 8 back . [from them as good ????] . I was there on my twenty-first 21st birthday. I was a little blue that day. I had been used used to having my birthday a dinner at home and then you know a man's twenty-first 21st birthday is rather important to him. We were discussing it and the other two patients in my room were threatening to give me a whipping [- 21 licks?] .

"One of the Sisters came in the room and said, 'I have tried everything else to make a man out of you and now I am going to try the last thing. I only hope that it will do more than we have been able to do.' And then another Sister came in rolling in a table . And such a table it was ! A real dinner for the three of us and in the center of the table was a cake with twenty-one 21 candles.

"I just couldn't say anything and I guess I would have been a big baby and cried if it had not been for the doctor. He told the Sisters to put the baby to bed that they would take care of the dinner [??] . We really did enjoy the dinner [that ?] , and as we were eating they bought brought me in a cake from mother and I had a nice birthday if it was spent in a hospital.

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"When I did get home I was not able to do anything , and the doctors had told me before I left the hospital that if I would take things easy for a year, I would be well and a good man again. After I had been at home for a few months and got a little of my strength back, my father decided that a good camping and hunting trip would put me on my feet again.

"After considering several places, he decided that down in Greene County would be the best place for me to go. That suited me fine, for there is nothing that I enjoy more than hunting and fishing. I went to Parks Mill and Ferry, and I just fished and hunted birds, rabbits, and squirrels for the rest of the year. I was camping out, but and even had a cow with me so I had all the fresh milk that I needed . could use. 9 "The only thing I didn't like was the water. I just couldn't get used to that, but I had to drink it. I met some of the finest people that I ever knew there and they were all so good to me; always bringing me [?] things to eat, and inviting me out to their homes. I stayed there until I had my health back and was ready for work again. But you know , [??] there are more kickory hickory nuts in Greene County than in the rest of the whole State of Georgia. I never saw so many nuts in my life.

"I came back to Athens in November 1910. As I was walking down the street I met a man I knew and he offered me a job. I accepted and went to work for in his store for twenty-five dollars \$25 a month . and I worked for him until April of 1911 and then I changed jobs. And on the fifteenth 15th day of April 1911 I went to work for [??] for thirty five dollars another store at\$35 a month, [and worked for thirty five dollars a month ?] in June of 1913 , when I got married. Then my boss raised me to forty-five dollars \$45 per month , and But he continued to give me raises until I was making \$175 per month. I worked [?] for him until the end of 1919. He was such a good man to work for ! and Always looking out for the people working for him. He was just a good old Scout all the way around.

"But you know I was from the country and I wanted to go back to the farm . [?] I don't think you just ever get that country out of you. I know I haven't !" So in 1920 I went back to the farm. The first year I made good with the farm, and I also put me up a country store." He



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laughed , and [?] [?] , “I have 've noticed you looking around in here, but you should have seen that country store of mine.

“It was small also, but Lord the stuff I did have packed in that small little place. It was a sight . I had to move things sometimes to get what the customers called for. I had farm supplies, such as 10 ploughs plows , hoes, rakes, seeds, and, in fact , just a little of everything [?] needed to farm with.

“Then the food stuff, everything in that line. Of course you I didn't forget cloth, thread, pins, powder, hair pins, combs and just all the things the women had have to have , and the children needed paper, pencils, and books for school. I tried to think of them all, and I really made money.

“But [as it goes in the country, as same as in town, [business conditions in town and country are much alike. The next year I lost as much as I had made before. Crops were bad with us all , and cotton prices went to the bottom. I lost heavily , for the other farmers could not pay for what they had bought in the my store. It was That just a bad year for all of the farmers, and it took me four 4 years to get over that [it's? losses.?)

“I never did like to give up when I was down, so I stayed right on that farm until I was on my feet again. Then as my wife did not like the country, I came back to town [Athens?] . This time I went to work in a mens clothing store.

“I worked there for three (3) years for [at?] \$124 per month. My boss was very good to me, but he had a good business and he carried a line of clothes that his customers could depend on. He is still in business here and he still carries the best in mens clothing and I really did like to work for him, but while he was good to me, he was really hard on the other clerks . but Finally, a dull season hit him , as well as all the other stores in town , and my salary as well as the other clerks was out. I was cut to \$100 a month. [?????]

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“When I left there I went to work in a department store. It was owned by an a fine old Jewish man . and he really was a fine old man. He was good to everybody and especially to the people that worked for him. There was just he and His family was small, just himself, his wife , and one child, a girl daughter . She was married , and her husband was [?] manager of the store. I went to work there for \$120 a month. 11 “The old man [?] tried to keep his business going straight and to keep pay his bills [?] promptly, but that son in law manager of his was rotten, and did so many things the old man [??old father-in-law] didn't know about and that in a few years he put the old man was in bankruptcy , and the shock of it this really caused the old man's his death.

“ He [????] passed away one evening at about six o'clock. He had a stroke of paralysis a day or so before and never knew anything after that. They called his son-in-law at the store, [????] but you know that sorry Jew [?] wouldn't go home until the store was closed . and The old man was dead [??] before we left [??] and the manager told us that he would have to close the store until the funeral was over, but that he wanted me and the two girls , that were working worked there , to come to the house the next morning to help them get fixed for the funeral.

“ Do you know I never saw anything like it in all my life ? ! And I don't think I was ever so mad about anything that really didn't concern me in anyway. We worked hard all day . They had to have everything , and could think of more things to do. The girls had to fix their [?] clothes [????] . I went with him [the manager?] to see about things for the old man, for they was were going to leave him at the undertaking parlor, because it would be cheaper than carrying him home , [?] .

“And when I saw what he was going to put on that old man, I really went up in the air, for it was an [?] old palm beach suit, that he had had it cleaned and pressed , and he was going to put an old worn-out shirt and tie on him, but that was just more than I could stand. I went

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out and bought a shirt and tie myself and asked the undertaker to put them on my old boss for he had always been good to me. [????????????] .

“ But [?? His son-in-law said [?] , “ What is What's the use ? in that? It is It's just wasting money and he will never know the difference,” but I remembered how neat and particular the old man had always been in 12 his clothes and I felt sure that he would want it that way [???] . I begged for a new suit out of the store to put on him but I sure didn't get it.

“The funeral was the next morning at eleven 11 o'clock. Of course, we all went. Do you know that [the manager and?] son-in-law of the old man gave me the key, [???] while they was were letting the body down in the grave, and told me to hurry back and get the store open. It was open and ready for business before the funeral wreath had been taken off the door. On the following Saturday when we was were paid for the week's work, he had took taken out for the day and a half that we worked at his house.

“The business was reorganized in his mother-in-law's name, but he was still manager. It took just about all of the old man's insurance to get it straightened out and that is where the old woman made the greatest mistake of her life for she has no more to say in regard to it than you have [, and I] can't even get a dollar unless he says so.

“I could see how things were but there was nothing that I could do about it. It [??] was just going down every day, and he had cut our salaries also, but he and his wife were having the time of their life lives . They only have one child, a girl , and they [have?] made one long trip after another and that takes money.

“ About this time I had opened up a small grocery store of my own for my oldest boy to run the store. I started that store with a capital of seventy dollars cash and a debt of almost \$700. My son was married, and we had five other children at home. We all [?????] lived out of that store, and I used my salary and what we made out of the store to pay on the notes.

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"It was a hard pull but I knew that if we tried hard enough we could make it, and I knew that I was going to have to do something for myself. For the way things were going at the store, I didn't really think it would last long. When he [the manager?] found out that I had opened up a store for myself, he wanted to know how I did it . but we worked hard and there was no need of extra help for [???] there were enough [?] of [?] [my family?] to look after the store . without my help .

"In about a year I started another grocery store . One of my daughters and her husband took care of the new store . and then My boss then said, "How in the world do you manage with your large family and on the salary that you are getting here. I told him my small salary was the reason that I was having to work so hard to try to get something else started, so that I could take care of my family.

"His business kept going down and he just bought until he was loaded down with stuff that he could not sell. The That fall was a disappointment for that is when he has the [???] most business, [but that was ??] and he went broke. For awhile it looked as if he would lose everything but he finally got a settlement with his creditors for 33 1/3 per cent, and just as soon as that was settled he put off part of the help, cut our salaried again, then / took his family on a trip to Florida.

That left just three of us to run the store and get it straight of after the inventory that had to be taken before the settlement could be made. We worked hard and had the store all cleaned and everything in place when he came back. He was telling told us about the grand trip and how they had enjoyed it. He had left his family in Florida for they did not want to come home.

"He told me that he paid five dollars \$5 for a berth on the trip home and I realized it when he paid me off that night that I had paid for that berth, for he had given me another five dollar \$5 cut and the others got another cut also. We were paying for his family's visit in Florida. I did not think it was right and told him so. 14 "He said, 'Well , that is that's the best

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I can do.' I asked him if he thought we could live on what he paid us. That made him mad and he said that was up to us, he didn't have anything to do with it. I told him that I was sure I couldn't live on it and that my family was just as important to me as his was to him.

"He said, 'Well , what are you going to do about it?' Only this, I replied and put the \*3 key to the [store\*3] down on his desk. He wanted to know what that meant. I asked him what did he think it meant. [It meant?] That I was leaving for I wouldn't work for him any longer. Then he wanted me to reconsider. I asked if he would reconsider and he said no, that He was doing the best he could.

"So I told him I didn't see where I could do any better either [?] by staying on there and that it was time for me to try something else. He laughed and asked me if I would be back in the morning. I did not didn't even answer ; just got my hat and walked out, and I haven't been back yet since .

"That is when I opened up my store here, and from what I hear I really did more business last fall than he did. For My customers that I had waited on for years followed me here to my store and I hope before the fall business starts this year that I will 'll be able to get in to a larger place for I really need more room.

"My wife and daughters help me and we manage just fine." ]?] "Do you do any credit business ; ?" I asked. & par; "No," he replied, "But I do use the lay-away plan. A small deposit will hold anything the customer wants for a reasonable time, and I find that is a much better plan than taking it out and paying later. It really is a help to the customer as well as to the store. 15 "My greatest mistake was in not pulling out for myself sooner. I would have been so much better off and [would have?] had something to fall back on. But I hope to do [??] that yet . I have I've built up a good trade here and both of my little grocery stores are going good. I don't have much trouble with collections in them, for if they don't pay up, I cut the customers off [???] until they do pay up [???] .

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"I have managed to give my older children a high school education and the younger ones are still in school. I have three grandchildren . but I have I've had my share of trouble and sickness in my family I guess [???] everyone , has them and with hard work I have I've managed to come through them all and get all [?] the bills paid.

"You know it has it's been years since I have I've had the time to think of a vacation . But just as soon as I can now, I am I'm going to take a good long vacation one just like I want. [?????] I asked just what would he liked in a vacation [He quickly replied,\*4] "A camping trip," \*4 "with good fishing and hunting. "I can get more pleasure out of that than any other kind of sport.

"Of course , I enjoy ball games. [?] Baseball is my favorite and [?] the movies also for too. I go to shows often with my kids for I really want them to enjoy life while they can , for as they grow older, they will may have many problems of life to face and work out, [?????] and I may not be here to help them then.

" And I always try to see that they go places and have a good time, but [now\*5] understand \*5, I want them to [go?] with the right class of people and [?] the best places , and we try to keep a pleasant home for them so they will want to bring their friends there as well as go out with them and there is usually a crowd of young people at our house . as they like to come. 16 "Some folks tell me I am too easy on them [my children?] , but I don't think so for they are smart and they all work at home / and in the stores when they are not in school , so why not try to see that they have some pleasure as well as all work. What do you think? [?] "That you are right, I replied , [?] and as I was leaving he walked to the door with me and said, "Come over to our house sometime and see just how we do live. We will be glad to have you."